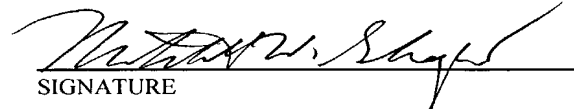


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|--|--|--|--|---|--|
| FORM PTO-1390 (Modified) (REV 11-2000) | | U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE | | ATTORNEY'S DOCKET NUMBER A-9183 | |
| TRANSMITTAL LETTER TO THE UNITED STATES DESIGNATED/ELECTED OFFICE (DO/EO/US) CONCERNING A FILING UNDER 35 U.S.C. 371 | | | | U.S. APPLICATION NO. (IF KNOWN, SEE 37 CFR <div style="font-size: 1.5em; font-weight: bold; text-align: center;">10/069768</div> | |
| INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION NO. PCT/US00/24837 | | INTERNATIONAL FILING DATE 11 September 2000 (11.09.00) | | PRIORITY DATE CLAIMED 10 September 1999 (10.09.99) | |
| TITLE OF INVENTION PASSIVATION OF MATERIAL USING ULTRA-FAST PULSED LASER | | | | | |
| APPLICANT(S) FOR DO/EO/US RAILKAR, Tarak A.; MALSHE, Ajay P.; and BROWN, William D. | | | | | |
| Applicant herewith submits to the United States Designated/Elected Office (DO/EO/US) the following items and other information: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This is a FIRST submission of items concerning a filing under 35 U.S.C. 371. 2. <input type="checkbox"/> This is a SECOND or SUBSEQUENT submission of items concerning a filing under 35 U.S.C. 371. 3. <input type="checkbox"/> This is an express request to begin national examination procedures (35 U.S.C. 371(f)). The submission must include items (5), (6), (9) and (24) indicated below. 4. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The US has been elected by the expiration of 19 months from the priority date (Article 31). 5. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A copy of the International Application as filed (35 U.S.C. 371 (c) (2)) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. <input type="checkbox"/> is attached hereto (required only if not communicated by the International Bureau). b. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> has been communicated by the International Bureau. c. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> is not required, as the application was filed in the United States Receiving Office (RO/US). 6. <input type="checkbox"/> An English language translation of the International Application as filed (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(2)). <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. <input type="checkbox"/> is attached hereto. b. <input type="checkbox"/> has been previously submitted under 35 U.S.C. 154(d)(4). 7. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Amendments to the claims of the International Application under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. 371 (c)(3)) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. <input type="checkbox"/> are attached hereto (required only if not communicated by the International Bureau). b. <input type="checkbox"/> have been communicated by the International Bureau. c. <input type="checkbox"/> have not been made; however, the time limit for making such amendments has NOT expired. d. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> have not been made and will not be made. 8. <input type="checkbox"/> An English language translation of the amendments to the claims under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(3)). 9. <input type="checkbox"/> An oath or declaration of the inventor(s) (35 U.S.C. 371 (c)(4)). 10. <input type="checkbox"/> An English language translation of the annexes to the International Preliminary Examination Report under PCT Article 36 (35 U.S.C. 371 (c)(5)). 11. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A copy of the International Preliminary Examination Report (PCT/IPEA/409). 12. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A copy of the International Search Report (PCT/ISA/210). <p>Items 13 to 20 below concern document(s) or information included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. <input type="checkbox"/> An Information Disclosure Statement under 37 CFR 1.97 and 1.98. 14. <input type="checkbox"/> An assignment document for recording. A separate cover sheet in compliance with 37 CFR 3.28 and 3.31 is included. 15. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A FIRST preliminary amendment. 16. <input type="checkbox"/> A SECOND or SUBSEQUENT preliminary amendment. 17. <input type="checkbox"/> A substitute specification. 18. <input type="checkbox"/> A change of power of attorney and/or address letter. 19. <input type="checkbox"/> A computer-readable form of the sequence listing in accordance with PCT Rule 13ter.2 and 35 U.S.C. 1.821 - 1.825. 20. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A second copy of the published international application under 35 U.S.C. 154(d)(4). 21. <input type="checkbox"/> A second copy of the English language translation of the international application under 35 U.S.C. 154(d)(4). 22. <input type="checkbox"/> Certificate of Mailing by Express Mail 23. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other items or information: | | | | | |
| ASSIGNEE INFORMATION Assignee: The Board of Trustees of the University of Arkansas | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|--------------|---|--------------------------|--|----|
| U.S. APPLICATION NO. (IF KNOWN) SEE 37 CFR 1.101(b)(1) 10/069768 | | INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION NO. PCT/US00/24837 | | ATTORNEY'S DOCKET NUMBER A-9183 | |
| 24. The following fees are submitted:. | | | | CALCULATIONS PTO USE ONLY | |
| BASIC NATIONAL FEE (37 CFR 1.492 (a) (1) - (5)) : | | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Neither international preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) nor international search fee (37 CFR 1.445(a)(2)) paid to USPTO and International Search Report not prepared by the EPO or JPO | | | | \$1040.00 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) not paid to USPTO but International Search Report prepared by the EPO or JPO | | | | \$890.00 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) not paid to USPTO but international search fee (37 CFR 1.445(a)(2)) paid to USPTO | | | | \$740.00 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) paid to USPTO but all claims did not satisfy provisions of PCT Article 33(1)-(4) | | | | \$710.00 | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) paid to USPTO and all claims satisfied provisions of PCT Article 33(1)-(4) | | | | \$100.00 | |
| ENTER APPROPRIATE BASIC FEE AMOUNT = | | | | \$100.00 | |
| Surcharge of \$130.00 for furnishing the oath or declaration later than <input type="checkbox"/> 20 <input type="checkbox"/> 30 months from the earliest claimed priority date (37 CFR 1.492 (e)). | | | | \$0.00 | |
| CLAIMS | NUMBER FILED | NUMBER EXTRA | RATE | | |
| Total claims | 39 - 20 = | 19 | x \$18.00 | \$342.00 | |
| Independent claims | 3 - 3 = | 0 | x \$84.00 | \$0.00 | |
| Multiple Dependent Claims (check if applicable) | | | <input type="checkbox"/> | \$0.00 | |
| TOTAL OF ABOVE CALCULATIONS = | | | | \$442.00 | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Applicant claims small entity status. See 37 CFR 1.27). The fees indicated above are reduced by 1/2. | | | | \$221.00 | |
| SUBTOTAL = | | | | \$221.00 | |
| Processing fee of \$130.00 for furnishing the English translation later than <input type="checkbox"/> 20 <input type="checkbox"/> 30 months from the earliest claimed priority date (37 CFR 1.492 (f)). | | | | \$0.00 | |
| TOTAL NATIONAL FEE = | | | | \$221.00 | |
| Fee for recording the enclosed assignment (37 CFR 1.21(h)). The assignment must be accompanied by an appropriate cover sheet (37 CFR 3.28, 3.31) (check if applicable). | | | <input type="checkbox"/> | \$0.00 | |
| TOTAL FEES ENCLOSED = | | | | \$221.00 | |
| | | | | Amount to be: refunded | \$ |
| | | | | charged | \$ |
| a. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A check in the amount of \$221.00 to cover the above fees is enclosed. | | | | | |
| b. <input type="checkbox"/> Please charge my Deposit Account No. _____ in the amount of _____ to cover the above fees. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed. | | | | | |
| c. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required, or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 50-1165 A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed. | | | | | |
| d. <input type="checkbox"/> Fees are to be charged to a credit card. WARNING: Information on this form may become public. Credit card information should not be included on this form. Provide credit card information and authorization on PTO-2038. | | | | | |
| NOTE: Where an appropriate time limit under 37 CFR 1.494 or 1.495 has not been met, a petition to revive (37 CFR 1.137(a) or (b)) must be filed and granted to restore the application to pending status. | | | | | |
| SEND ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO: | | | | | |
| Mitchell W. Shapiro, Reg. No. 31,568 Miles & Stockbridge P.C. 1751 Pinnacle Drive Suite 500 McLean, Virginia 22102 (703) 903-9000 | | | | | |
|  SIGNATURE | | | | | |
| Mitchell W. Shapiro NAME | | | | | |
| 31,568 REGISTRATION NUMBER | | | | | |
| February 28, 2002 DATE | | | | | |

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10/069768

JC19 Rec'd PCT/PTO 2 8 FEB 2002

A-9183

PATENT APPLICATION

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re the Application of:

RAILKAR, Tarak A. et al.

Intl. Appln. No.: PCT/US00/24837

Intl. Filing Date: 11 September 2000

For: PASIVATION OF MATERIAL USING ULTRA-FAST PULSED
LASER

(National Stage of PCT/US00/24837 filed 11 September 2000)

* * *

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

Assistant Commissioner for Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

Prior to examination, please amend the above-identified
patent application as indicated below.

IN THE CLAIMS:

11. (Amended) An article comprising a solid material
having a surface passivated by the method according to any
of Claims 1-7.

Please cancel Claims 12-16, without prejudice or disclaimer.

REMARKS

Claims 12-16 have been cancelled to reduce the filing fee.

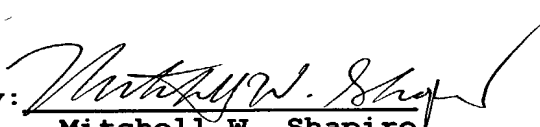
Claim 11 has been amended to conform the multiple dependency with U.S. practice.

All claims presented for examination satisfy the provisions of PCT Article 33(1)-(4), as will be evident from the International Preliminary Examination Report.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge to Deposit Account No. 50-1165 any fees that may be required by this paper and to credit any overpayment to that Account.

Respectfully submitted,

By:


Mitchell W. Shapiro
Reg. No. 31,568

MWS:lmb

Miles & Stockbridge P.C.
1751 Pinnacle Drive
Suite 500
McLean, Virginia 22102-3833
(703) 903-9000

February 28, 2002

Marked-up Copy of Claims -- PCT/US00/24837

11. (Amended) An article comprising a solid material having a surface passivated by the method according to any of Claims [1-10] 1-7.

11/PRTS

1000010/069768
JC19 Rec'd PCT/PTO 28 FEB 2002
PCT/US00/24837

WO 01/18852

TITLE: PASSIVATION OF MATERIAL USING ULTRA-FAST PULSED LASER

5

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application claims the benefit of the priority of U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/153,069, filed September 10, 1999, the entire disclosure of which is incorporated herein by
10 reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention:

This invention relates to forming passivated surfaces on solid materials and more particularly to formation of passivated
15 surfaces on semiconductor materials by laser irradiation.

Brief Description of the Prior Art:

The design and manufacture of semiconductor devices is based on the electronic properties of the bulk semiconductor material of which they are made. The bulk material is
20 ordinarily a single crystal having a uniform lattice structure and containing various dopants, which introduce the impurity levels required to provide the desired electrical conduction properties. Within the bulk crystal each atom is bound to its neighbors in the lattice. However, at the surface of the
25 crystal the regular lattice is interrupted. Accordingly the atoms at the surface of the crystal exhibit dangling bonds, not used to join neighboring atoms, but available to react with other materials in the environment, e.g., oxygen, to introduce surface energy levels or states that may change or interfere
30 with the electrical properties of the device. In order to prevent such degradation of the properties of the semiconductor device, a passivating layer is customarily applied to the

surface of the crystal in order to tie up any dangling bonds and thereby stabilize the surface against any further degradation.

In the case of silicon, which has been the material of choice for a wide variety of electronic applications for almost
5 four decades, the surface is easily passivated by formation thereon of a stable adherent layer of silicon dioxide. The passivating oxide layer can be formed by conventional techniques such as thermal oxidation of the surface or chemical vapor deposition (CVD). This stable surface chemistry of silicon, as
10 well its low cost, easy availability, and mature processing technology, has favored the wide use of silicon as the substrate material in the manufacture of semiconductor devices. However, silicon also has certain limitations, particularly in the field of wireless communications, especially as higher frequencies
15 have come into use. Because silicon has an indirect band gap structure, it is less efficient for applications involving radio-frequency (RF) and wireless communications. Consequently, other semiconductor materials, especially those possessing a direct band gap (i.e., those materials wherein the valence band energy maxima and conduction band energy minima occur at the
20 same k value in the E - k space) have come to be used for such applications.

Among the direct-band gap semiconductors, gallium arsenide (GaAs), a III-V compound semiconductor, has come to be widely
25 used. As a direct consequence of the direct band gap, together with a higher band gap energy (1.42 eV for GaAs, versus 1.1 eV for Si) GaAs supports high frequency device applications, such as cellular (e.g., cellular telephones (cell phones)) and other wireless communication equipment, whereas silicon cannot.
30 Consequently, GaAs semiconductor devices, although generally more expensive, have found a commercially valuable niche where silicon cannot effectively compete.

However, manufacture of semiconductor devices from GaAs also faces some challenges. Most importantly, unlike Si, GaAs does not form a natural and stable protective passivating layer. Consequently, it has been difficult to design and manufacture metal-oxide-semiconductor (MOS) devices using GaAs. Furthermore, the oxides of gallium and arsenic are somewhat volatile, with the result that they may escape from the surface after they are formed, causing further depletion of their respective atoms with time. Since the electronic properties of GaAs depend on the stoichiometric ratio of Ga to As atoms, such an uncontrolled oxidation degrades the electronic performance of devices fabricated on GaAs wafers. To overcome this problem, passivation of the surface is conventionally achieved by treating the surface with a protective overlayer, generally an organic polymer. Although the passivating overlayer protects the surface, and hence stabilizes the electronic properties of the GaAs, it also introduces an undesirable feature because it entails a higher cost for controlling the electronic properties of the device.

Accordingly, a need has continued to exist for a method of preparing a stable passive surface on gallium arsenide wafers and the like used in manufacturing semiconductor devices.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The problem of passivating the surface of a semiconductor substrate, such as gallium arsenide and the like, has now been alleviated by the process of the invention wherein the surface of a substrate material is irradiated with one or more ultra short laser pulses until a stable passive surface is achieved. The invention also embraces a passive surface prepared by the process of the invention, and a passive surface having nanoclusters of atoms distributed thereon.

Accordingly, it is an object of the invention to provide a passive surface on a solid semiconductor substrate.

A further object is to provide a method for forming a passive surface on a semiconductor substrate.

5 A further object is to provide a method for forming a passive surface on gallium arsenide.

A further object is to provide a semiconductor having a passive surface.

10 A further object is to provide solid gallium arsenide having a passive surface.

Further objects of the invention will become apparent from the description of the invention which follows.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

15 Figure 1 shows a micrograph taken with a scanning electron microscope (SEM) of a passive surface of gallium arsenide prepared by the process of the invention.

Figure 2 is an SEM micrograph of a gallium arsenide passive surface at a somewhat higher magnification.

20 Figure 3 is a micrograph taken with an atomic force microscope (AFM) showing a gallium arsenide surface before treatment by the process of the invention.

Figure 4 is an AFM micrograph showing a gallium arsenide surface after treatment by the process of the invention.

25 Figure 5 shows the thermally stimulated exoelectron spectra of a GaAs surface before and after treatment by the process of the invention.

Figures 6A-6D show x-ray photoelectron spectra of a GaAs surface before treatment with ultra-short laser pulses according to the invention, for As atoms located at the surface and at
30 depths of 5 nm, 10 nm and 15 nm below the surface, respectively.

Figures 7A-7D show x-ray photoelectron spectra of a GaAs surface before treatment with ultra-short laser pulses according to the invention, for Ga atoms located at the surface and at depths of 5 nm, 10 nm and 15 nm below the surface, respectively.

5 Figure 8 shows the x-ray photoelectron spectra of a GaAs surface after treatment with 250 ultra-short laser pulses according to the invention, for As atoms located at the surface of the material.

10 Figure 9 shows the x-ray photoelectron spectra of a GaAs surface after treatment with 250 ultra-short laser pulses according to the invention, for Ga atoms located at the surface of the material.

15 Figure 10 shows the x-ray photoelectron spectra of a GaAs surface after treatment with 500 ultra-short laser pulses according to the invention, for Ga atoms located at the surface of the material.

20 Figure 11 shows the x-ray photoelectron spectra of a GaAs surface after treatment with 500 ultra-short laser pulses according to the invention, for As atoms located at the surface of the material.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION AND PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

25 According to the invention the surface of a material to be passivated may be treated with pulses of electromagnetic radiation of duration sufficiently limited so that the entire energy of the pulse is concentrated at the surface. This concentration is typically achieved by irradiating the substrate material with pulses that are no longer than the period of
30 atomic vibrations of the material. These atomic vibrations typically have a period of the order of 10^{-11} seconds at room temperature (about 300°K). Pulses of radiation useful in

devoid of extraneous materials such as oxides will depend on the energy of the pulses and the degree of contamination on the surface before treatment, as well as the material of the substrate having the surface to be treated. Accordingly, the energy density of the individual ultra-short pulses may vary from about 0.01 mJ/cm² to about 100 mJ/cm². The number of pulses may vary from relatively few, e.g., 10 pulses, or even less if very energetic pulses are used, to several thousand pulses. Treatments are conveniently performed and controlled when a pulse energy level is selected that produces the desired passivation effect using a number of pulses in the range of from about 50 pulses to about 2000 pulses, preferably from about 100 pulses to about 1000 pulses.

Although any procedure or equipment may be used to produce the ultra-short pulses of radiation used in the method of the invention, such pulses are currently most conveniently produced using a pulsed laser operating in a mode that produces a train of ultra-short pulses, preferably pulses having a duration less than about 1 picosecond, i.e., a femtosecond laser. Such lasers can emit radiation having from about 1 pulse per second to several thousand pulses per second, e.g., about 10,000 pulses per second or more. At such conventional pulse rates, re-formation of the surface oxide between pulses does not ordinarily occur to any significant extent. Nevertheless, it is according to the invention to use any pulse rate that produces a net removal of native surface oxide and passivation of the underlying surface of the semiconductor material. Evidently, the total energy that the laser pulse train has to deliver in order to achieve a passivated surface will depend on the initial condition of the surface to be treated, e.g., the thickness of an oxide layer or the like, and the chemical composition of the material to be treated. This energy can be delivered by any

feasible arrangement of pulse duration, pulse intensity and pulse frequency. The laser beam may be focused or unfocused as convenient for providing the required energy density on the surface of the material to be passivated. The practitioner will
5 adapt the available equipment to the needs of a particular material to achieve a satisfactory passivated surface.

The energy density of the beam is applied repeatedly to a given area of the semiconductor surface to produce the desired passivating effect. If a surface having an area larger
10 than the effective cross-sectional area of the beam is to be treated, the beam can be scanned over the surface area. Each portion of the surface area may be passivated by the process of the invention, either sequentially or by repeated scanning of the surface.

It will also be recognized by the practitioner that the
15 wavelength of the laser radiation used in the process of the invention is preferably chosen to be absorbed by the surface atoms of the substrate and not to penetrate substantially into the bulk of the substrate. In general lasers emitting radiation
20 in the range from the near infra-red region of the spectrum to the far ultra-violet region are useful in the process of the invention. Accordingly lasers emitting at wavelengths in the range from about 2 micrometers to about 50 nanometers are most useful. However, the practitioner will adapt the laser
25 wavelength to the absorption spectrum of the substrate to insure that the radiation is absorbed by the surface atoms thereof.

The process of the invention is particularly useful in preparing passive surfaces on semiconductor materials, especially those, such as gallium arsenide, that do not form
30 stable adherent surface oxide layers.

The surface of a gallium arsenide wafer, as prepared by the conventional synthesis of single-crystal GaAs and subsequent

cutting and finishing of the wafer surface, will, in general, have numerous dangling bonds, i.e., electronic orbitals that are directed generally outward with respect to the bulk material and are not satisfied by bonding to other atoms. The bonds react
5 relatively rapidly with any reactive material that contacts the surface. In particular, a gallium arsenide, or other semiconductor, surface having such dangling bonds will rapidly accumulate an oxide layer formed by reaction with atmospheric oxygen. However, as discussed above, this oxide layer is not a
10 stable protective layer for GaAs such as that formed on silicon. Accordingly, in order to prepare a passive surface according to the invention, it is desirable to remove the oxide layer and form a surface wherein the bonds of the surface atoms are redirected toward neighboring surface atoms.

15 The invention will be illustrated by the following example, which is provided for illustrative purposes only, and is not intended to limit the scope of the claims.

EXAMPLE

20 This example illustrates the treatment of a gallium arsenide surface to remove the naturally existing surface oxide and prepare a stable passive surface.

Samples of n(100) GaAs, 600 micrometers thick, were prepared. Each sample was about 1 cm x 1 cm in dimensions, and
25 was degreased by treating it with warm methanol for about two minutes. The samples were then rinsed in flowing de-ionized water and dried in flowing nitrogen gas. The cleaned GaAs samples were mounted vertically on a computer controlled X-Y-Z translation stage.

30 The samples were then treated with an unfocussed femtosecond laser beam. The laser treatment was performed in air in an effort to make the laser treatment as representative

as possible of conventional environmental conditions in the semiconductor industry. The laser was an excimer pumped UV-dye laser having a wavelength of about 248 nm, a pulse duration of about 380 femtoseconds (fs), and an output energy of about 10 millijoules (mJ) per pulse, with a maximum pulse repetition rate of about 10 Hz. The energy density of the pulses was about 1.3 millijoules per square centimeter (mJ/cm²).

The GaAs samples were treated with 250, 500 and 1000 laser pulses in order to investigate possible dose dependent effects, if any. About half of each sample was exposed within the cross-sectional area of the beam, while the other half was protected with a mask for use as a reference for comparing the treated and untreated areas.

The treated samples were then analyzed by scanning electron microscopy (SEM), x-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS), atomic force microscopy (AFM), and thermally stimulated exoelectron emission spectroscopy (TSEE). The results are reported below.

1.) Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM) measurements:

The treated samples of GaAs were observed using a scanning electron microscope (Hitachi, S2300). The observations were performed at a base pressure of about 10^{-4} torr. Images displayed on the microscope's display screen are captured with an inbuilt Polaroid" camera. The images indicated the surface structural changes produced by the treatment. Figures 1 and 2 show the passivated surface of the GaAs sample after laser treatment, Figure 1 shows the surface at a magnification of 2000x; Figure 2 shows the surface at a magnification of 20,000x. The presence of small clusters almost uniformly over the treated surface is seen. The untreated surface did not exhibit such features.

2.) Atomic Force Microscopy (AFM) measurements:

AFM measurements were performed on treated and untreated GaAs samples in order to observe the surface on an atomic level and to correlate the surface appearance with the observed passivation. The samples were imaged with a Nanoscope III (Digital Instruments) contact mode type of AFM under ambient conditions. A 200 μm triangularly shaped silicon nitride cantilever (with force constant $k = 0.12 \text{ N}\cdot\text{m}^{-1}$, from Digital Instruments) was chosen for imaging. The samples were secured on a steel disk with double sided tape, and the assembly was placed on a magnetically controlled scanner. Of particular interest in these measurements was the root-mean-square (rms) roughness of the treated and untreated samples, and their appearance.

A comparison between virgin and treated samples shows that the laser-treated samples exhibit features which indicate that atoms have agglomerated and formed clusters. This effect was most pronounced for samples treated with 500 and 1000 laser pulses. The root-mean-square (rms) roughness of the GaAs surface, as indicated by these AFM measurements, is 0.37 nm for a virgin sample and 4.2 nm for a treated sample. The increase in surface roughness, at an atomic level, by about an order of magnitude can be correlated with the formation of GaAs clusters on the surface. The difference between the untreated and treated surfaces can be seen in Figures 3 and 4, wherein Figure 3 shows an untreated surface, and Figure 4 shows a treated surface. The images in Figures 3 and 4 are presented in the conventional perspective views generated by the AFM. Note that the scanned areas and corresponding linear scales on the scanning axes are different for the two figures. Figure 3 shows a scan area 984.4 nm per side and the linear scale of the X-axis

is 200,000 nm/division (div). Figure 4 shows a scan area 384.8 nm per side and the linear scale of the X-axis is 100,000 nm/division (div). The scale of the vertical axis (Z) is the same for both figures, i.e., 5,000 nm/div.

5

3.) Thermally Stimulated Exoelectron Emission (TSEE)
measurements:

The TSEE spectrometer consists of a stainless steel vacuum chamber pumped by rotary and oil diffusion pumps equipped with a liquid nitrogen cold-trap. The instrument contains a sample holder provided with an electrical resistance heater that simultaneously holds the sample and also provides the steadily increasing temperature (thermal ramp) that is required for TSEE measurements. The heating rate was set to 9K per minute, using a microprocessor controlled power supply. The emitted exoelectrons were detected with a channel electron multiplier (Galileo, CEM 4700) that is used in the pulsed mode of operation. Output of the electron multiplier is fed to the "Y" stage of an X-Y plotter (Philips, PM8132). Sample temperature is monitored by placing a chromel-alumel thermocouple in close proximity to the sample. The thermocouple output formed the "X" input to the X-Y plotter. The TSEE spectrum is thus a plot of emitted exoelectron intensity, as a function of sample temperature. The electronically active trapping centers are identified as peaks in the TSEE spectrum. The position of the peaks on the temperature axis is used to estimate the defect energy by the relation

$$E_g = 25 \cdot k_b \cdot T_m \quad (1)$$

where E_g is the activation energy of the trap created by a surface defect, k_b is Boltzmann's constant, and T_m is the

30

temperature at the maximum of the peak in the TSEE spectrum due to electrons emitted from that defect.

Figure 5 shows the TSEE spectra of untreated (lower trace (a)) and treated (upper trace (b)) GaAs surfaces. The horizontal axis shows the sample temperature in Kelvins, while the vertical axis shows the intensity of thermally stimulated electron emission in arbitrary units. Table 1 compares the peak positions and corresponding peak energies for treated and untreated GaAs (n(100) surface). The spectra of the treated surfaces were identical, within experimental error, for samples treated with 250, 500 and 1000 laser pulses.

Table 1

| Untreated samples | | Treated Samples | |
|----------------------|------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Peak Temperature (K) | Trap Energy (eV) | Peak Temperature (K) | Trap Energy (eV) |
| 165 | 0.356 | 162 | 0.349 |
| 325 | 0.701 | 325 | 0.701 |
| 432 | 0.932 | centered around 450 | centered around 0.970 |

It can be observed that the peaks at 165 K and 325 K in virgin GaAs are almost unaltered by the laser treatment. However, the single peak centered around 432 K in a virgin sample is seen to change to several small peaks, broaden considerably, and shift to a higher temperature following the femtosecond laser treatment. The shift toward higher temperatures is an indication of an increase in electronic activation energy, while the broadening as splitting of the single peak into multiple peaks suggests the presence of several energy levels within a narrow energy interval, possible due to the formation of small

GaAs clusters on the surface. Shifting of the center of the peak to higher temperatures indicates the presence of higher activation energy for the defects at the surface as a consequence of the laser treatment. Since the laser treatment was performed in air, a reasonable explanation for this observation is the formation of an oxide layer on the surface. However, based on the TSEE measurements that were performed as function of time, the treated surface appears to be chemically stable, as though it were passivated. To investigate the validity of these deductions x-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS) measurements were performed.

4. X-ray Photoelectron Spectroscopy (XPS) Measurements:

X-ray Photoelectron Spectroscopy (XPS) measurements were performed to investigate the surface chemistry of the femtosecond laser-treated samples and to correlate the results with SEM observations and TSEE measurements. The XPS spectrometer used also was equipped with an integral argon-ion gun that enables in-situ etching of the sample to permit the study of the composition of the substrate at short distances below the original surface. The XPS spectrometer, manufactured by Kratos Analytical, has a sample transfer chamber that is isolated from the measurement chamber by means of a gate valve. The sample is transferred to the measurement chamber by a sample translator stage within the instrument.

The instrument can be adjusted to excite electrons from preselected orbitals of the atoms in the surface under investigation. The results of the measurements are shown in Figures 6A-6D, 7A-7D, and 8-11. These figures illustrate the intensity of photoelectron emission for orbitals of different binding energy. The horizontal axis shows the binding energy in electron volts (eV), while the vertical axis shows the intensity

of the electron emission in counts registered by the XPS spectrometer.

Figures 6A-6D and 7A-7D show the spectral lines recorded for As 3d electrons and Ga 3d electrons, respectively, at depths of 0 nm, 5 nm, 10 nm and 15 nm, for untreated GaAs. The peaks at 45 eV, as seen in Figure 6A and at 20 eV, as seen in Figure 7A indicate the oxides of gallium and arsenic, respectively. As seen from the series of spectra, the oxide peaks disappear after the first milling operation. Thus, there is no oxide below the surface of the substrate.

Figures 8 and 9 show the XPS spectra of As 3d and Ga 3d, respectively, of the surface of a sample treated with 250 laser pulses. The presence of oxides of both Ga and As is clearly seen. However, for samples treated with 500 pulses, no oxide of either Ga or As is detected on the surface. (See Figures 10 and 11, respectively.) Furthermore, repeated analyses of the treated surface after exposure to ambient atmosphere for intervals of up to one month detected no oxide formation. Oxide normally forms on a GaAs surface within a few minutes of exposure to atmospheric air. Consequently, these results establish that the surface of the GaAs substrate has been rendered passive to atmospheric oxygen by the femtosecond-laser treatment of the invention. The same results were obtained for samples treated with 1000 pulses of laser radiation at the same energy density. The sample surfaces treated with only 250 pulses at an energy density of 1.3 mJ/cm^2 exhibited the presence of some residual oxide.

The results of these experiments suggest that surface treatment of a GaAs surface with ultra-short pulses of electromagnetic radiation, such as that provided by a pulsed femtosecond laser, produces a surface that does not react with atmospheric oxygen at room temperature and is characterized by

the formation of clusters over the surface and the presence of surface defects associated with the clusters.

Although applicants are not bound by theoretical considerations, they believe that the data reported above permit certain conclusions regarding the structure of the passive surface produced by the process of the invention and the mechanism by which such a surface is produced. It should be noticed that the SEM data (Figures 1 and 2) indicate surface features having a size on the order of 1-2 μm , which can be interpreted as clusters of atoms ("microclusters"). The AFM data (Figures 3 and 4) display the structure of the surface on a much smaller scale, i.e., the entire scan area of the AFM instrument covers an area of about 1 μm square (Figure 3) or 0.4 μm square (Figure 4). Consequently, the AFM data relate to the surface of a single one of the micro-clusters seen in the SEM images. Thus, the AFM data show a coarseness of about 4.2 nm, and the clusters having dimensions of this order of magnitude, e.g., 1-10 nm, may be referred to as "nanoclusters".

Inasmuch as the treatment using an ultra-short pulsed laser (femtosecond laser) deposits substantially the entire energy of a pulse at the actual surface of the substrate material in a time that is short relative to the vibrations of the atoms in the surface, the generation of thermal phonons that will dissipate the energy into the bulk material does not occur. Consequently, the subsurface atoms are essentially not heated in such a treatment, and, accordingly, the heat affected zone (HAZ) in the femtosecond laser-treated material is practically absent. The result is that the gallium and arsenic atoms do not have time to rearrange by diffusion. Hence the stoichiometry as well as the relative percentage of Ga and As does not change in the treated GaAs surface. Thus, when a fresh surface is created by

laser ablation of a superficial oxide layer, it may be expected to have dangling or unsaturated bonds only at the external, or "upper", side of the substrate. In order to reduce the surface energy, it appears that the some migration of atoms can occur
5 along the surface to form clusters having bonds arranged in closed loops. These clusters would not have unsaturated bonds, and hence there is no chemical affinity or reactivity at the processed surface. Thus, a non-reactive or "passive" surface is generated. Since the GaAs stoichiometry is maintained, the
10 bonds do not experience any excessive stress and remain stable for an extended period of time. It is believed that such a surface exhibiting clustering at the atomic level, i.e., nanoclusters, results from the reduction of surface energy at the fresh surface created by removal of native oxide. This
15 reduced surface energy is responsible for the passivated behavior of the GaAs surface. Consequently, the surface exhibiting atomic nanoclusters is correlated with the passive property that is produced by the laser treatment according to the invention.

20 The larger features (microclusters) seen in the AFM images may be formed because the ultra-short laser pulse generates a plasma in the air adjacent to the surface that lasts longer than the pulse itself. Thus, although the subsurface atoms are not heated by the laser pulse, as explained above, the atoms at the
25 exact surface may acquire enough energy from such a plasma to undergo a superficial melting and subsequent resolidification, with formation of the somewhat coarser clustering seen in the SEM images.

30 The invention having now been fully described, it should be understood that it may be embodied in other specific forms or variations without departing from its spirit or essential characteristics. Accordingly, the embodiments

described above are to be considered in all respects as
illustrative and not restrictive, the scope of the invention
being indicated by the appended claims rather than the foregoing
description, and all changes which come within the meaning and
5 range of equivalency of the claims are intended to be embraced
therein.

WE CLAIM:

1. A method of passivating the surface of a solid material, comprising irradiating the surface of a solid material with a pulsed laser beam having a pulse duration no longer than
5 the atomic vibration period of the solid material.
2. The method of Claim 1, wherein said solid material is a semiconductor.
- 10 3. The method of Claim 1, wherein said solid material is a compound semiconductor.
4. The method of Claim 1, wherein said solid material is a III-V compound semiconductor.
- 15 5. The method of Claim 1, wherein said solid material is gallium arsenide.
6. The method of Claim 1, wherein said laser emits
20 radiation in a wavelength range from about 2 micrometers to about 50 nanometers.
7. A method of passivating the surface of a solid material, comprising irradiating the surface of a solid material
25 with a pulsed laser beam having a pulse duration not greater than about 10^{-11} seconds.
8. The method of any one of Claims 1-7, wherein said pulses have a duration not greater than about 10^{-12} seconds.
- 30 9. The method of Claim 8, wherein said pulses have a duration not greater than about 0.5×10^{-12} seconds.

10. The method of any one of Claims 1-7, wherein said pulses have an energy density in the range from about 0.01 mJ/cm² to about 100 mJ/cm².

5

11. An article comprising a solid material having a surface passivated by the method according to any of claims 1-10.

10

12. An article comprising a solid semiconductor having a passive surface devoid of a passivating layer of a different material.

15

13. An article comprising a solid semiconductor having a passive surface devoid of a passivating oxide layer.

14. The article of any one of Claims 11-13, wherein said semiconductor is a compound semiconductor.

20

15. The article of any one of Claims 11-13, wherein said semiconductor is a III-V compound semiconductor.

16. The article of any one of Claims 11-13, wherein said semiconductor is gallium arsenide.

25

17. An article comprising a solid semiconductor having a passive surface bearing nanoclusters of atoms.

18. An article according to Claim 17, wherein said semiconductor is a compound semiconductor.

30

19. An article according to Claim 17, wherein said semiconductor is a III-V compound semiconductor.

20. An article according to Claim 17, wherein said
5 semiconductor is gallium arsenide.

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(72) Inventors; and

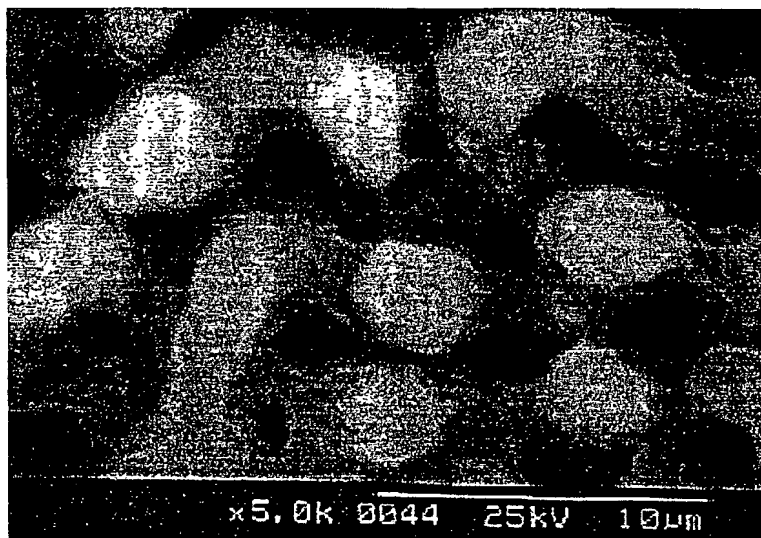
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(54) Title: PASSIVATION OF MATERIAL USING ULTRA-FAST PULSED LASER



(57) Abstract: The surface of a semiconductor material, e.g., gallium arsenide, is passivated by irradiating the surface with ultra-short laser pulses, until a stable passive surface is achieved. The passive surface so prepared is devoid of a superficial oxide layer.

WO 01/18852 A1

I/II

FIG. 1



FIG. 2

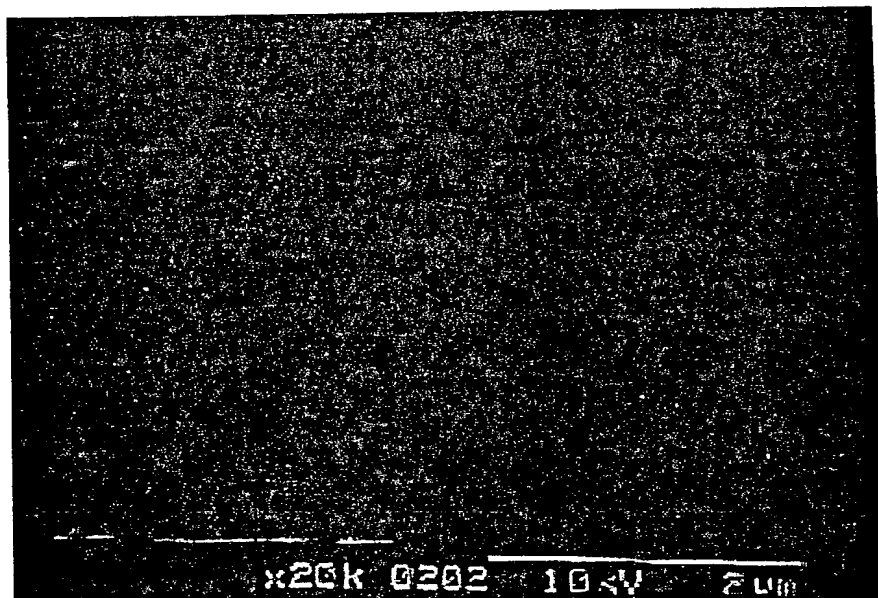
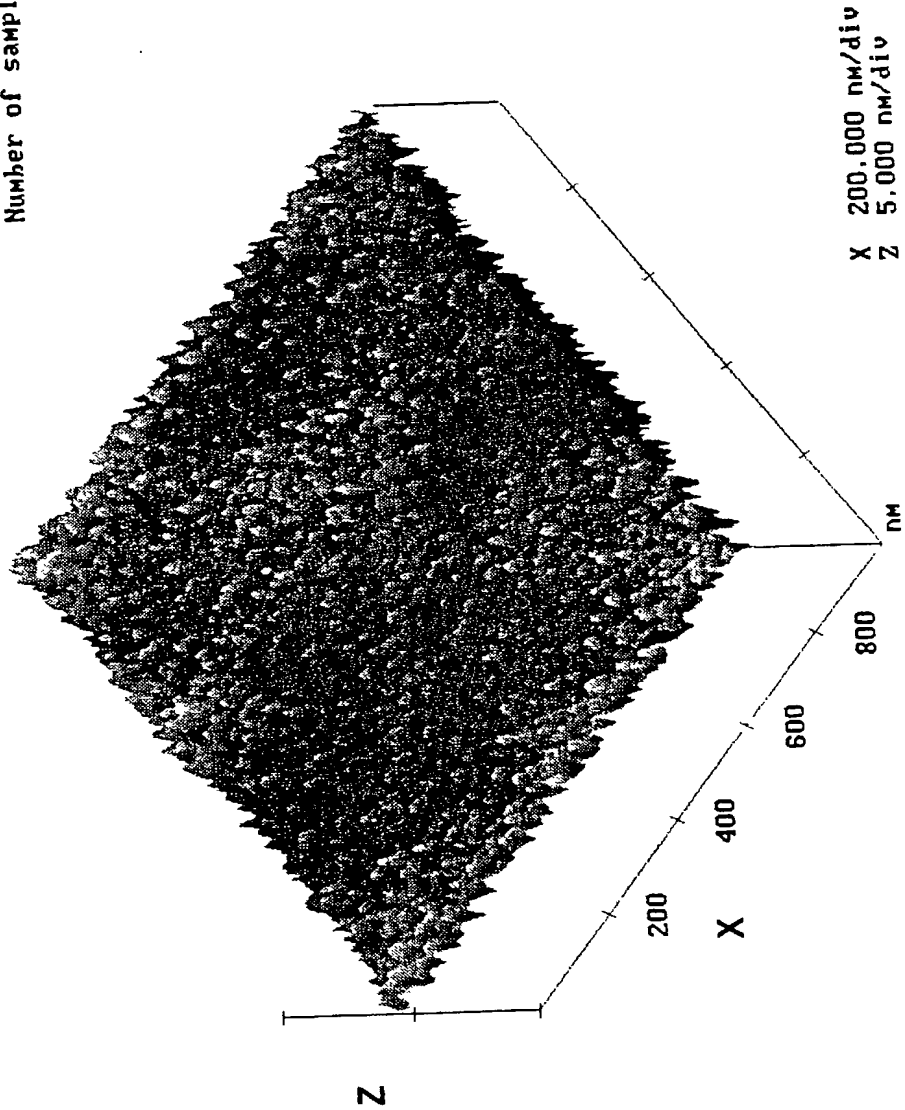


FIG. 3

AFM
984.4 nm
0 U
10.17 Hz
256

NanoScope
Scan size
Setpoint
Scan rate
Number of samples



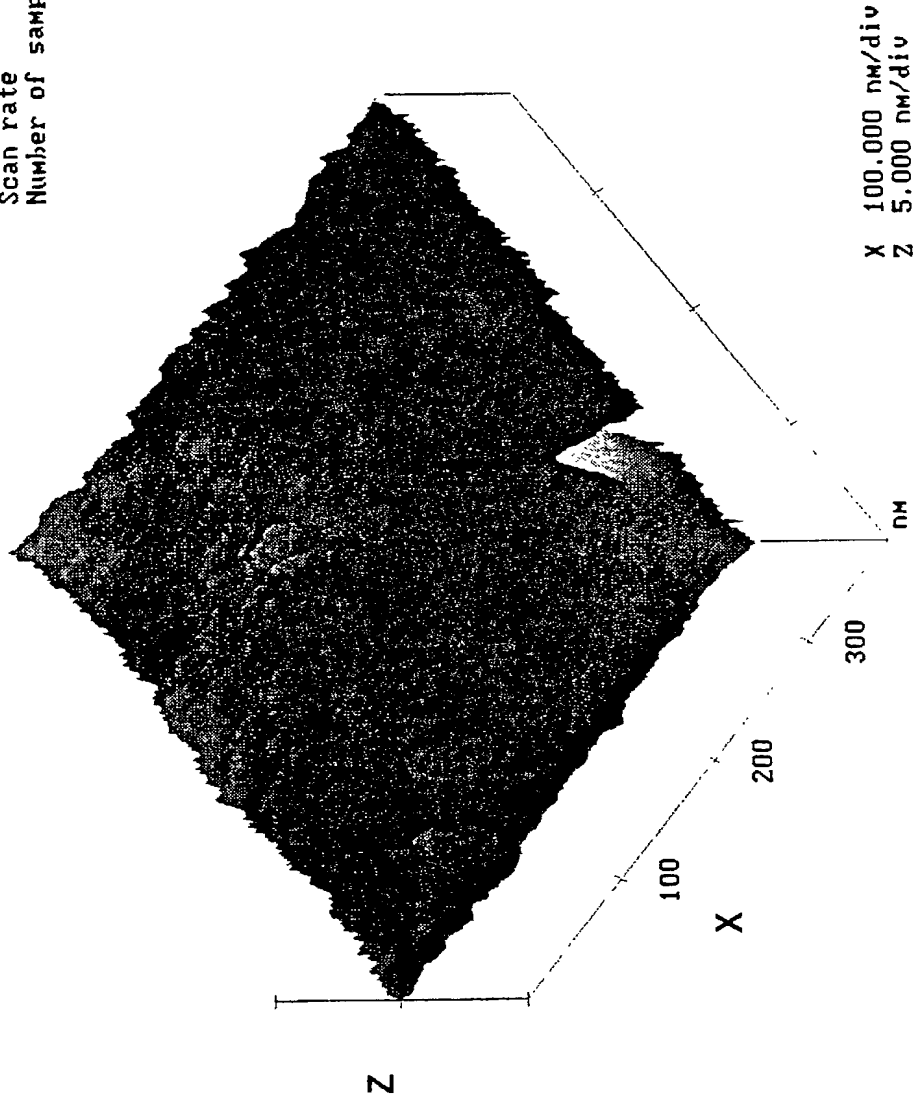
gaasvir.013

3/11

FIG. 4

AFM
384.8 nm
0 V
20.35 Hz
256

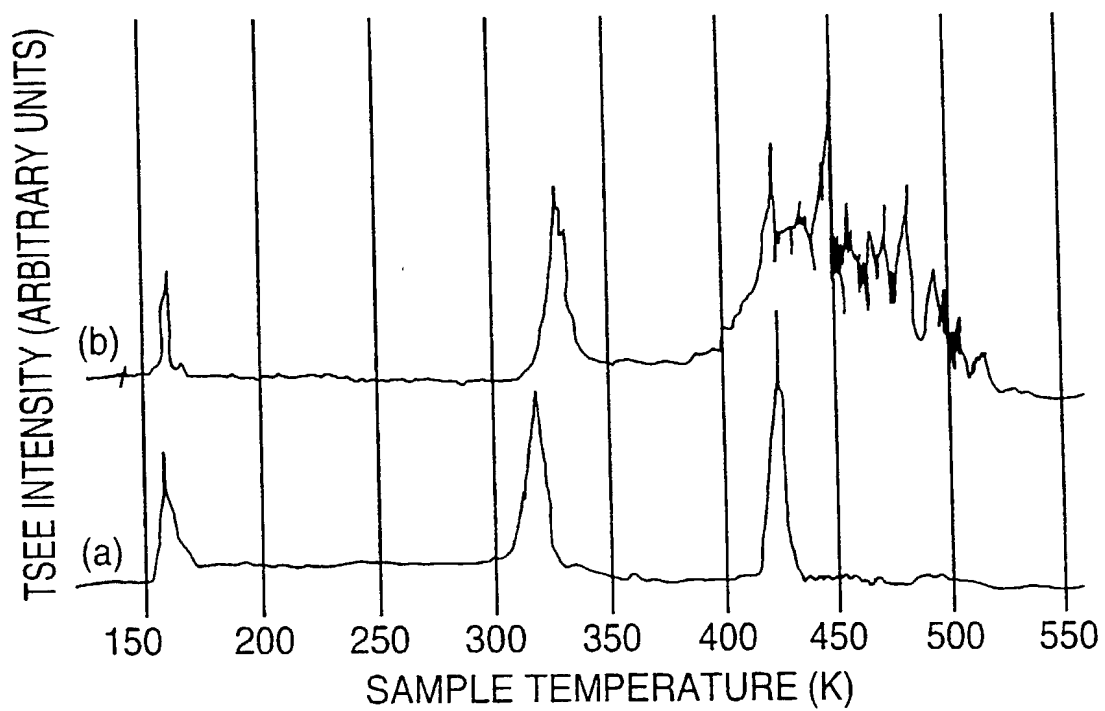
NanoScope
Scan size
Setpoint
Scan rate
Number of samples



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4/11

FIG. 5



5/11

FIG. 6A

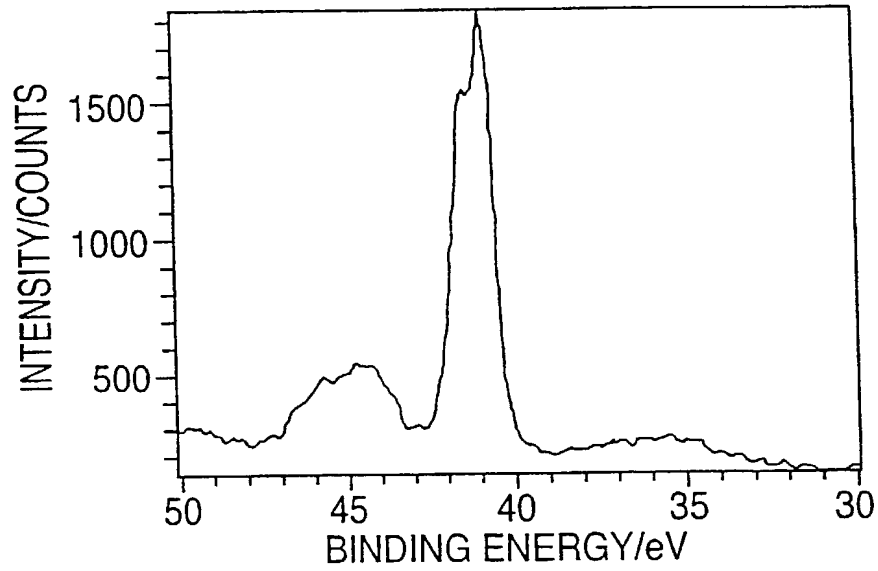
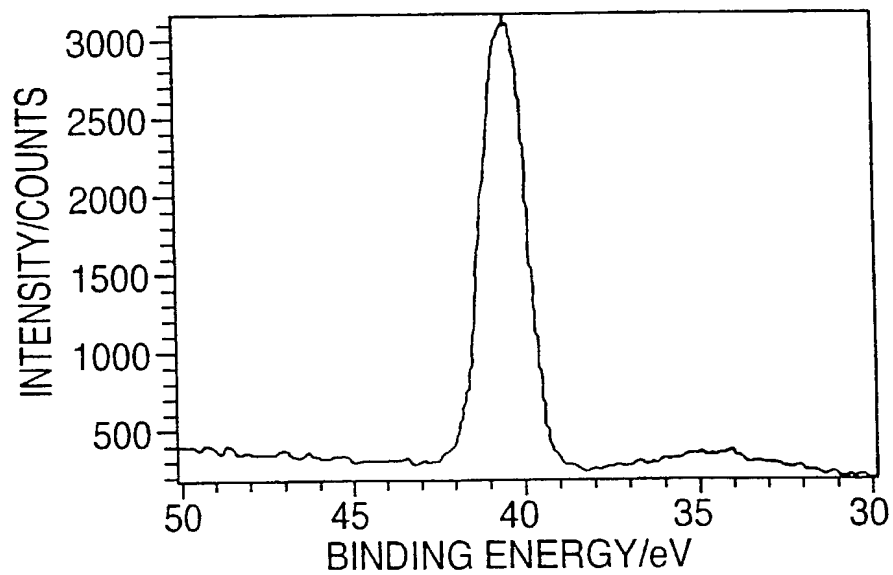
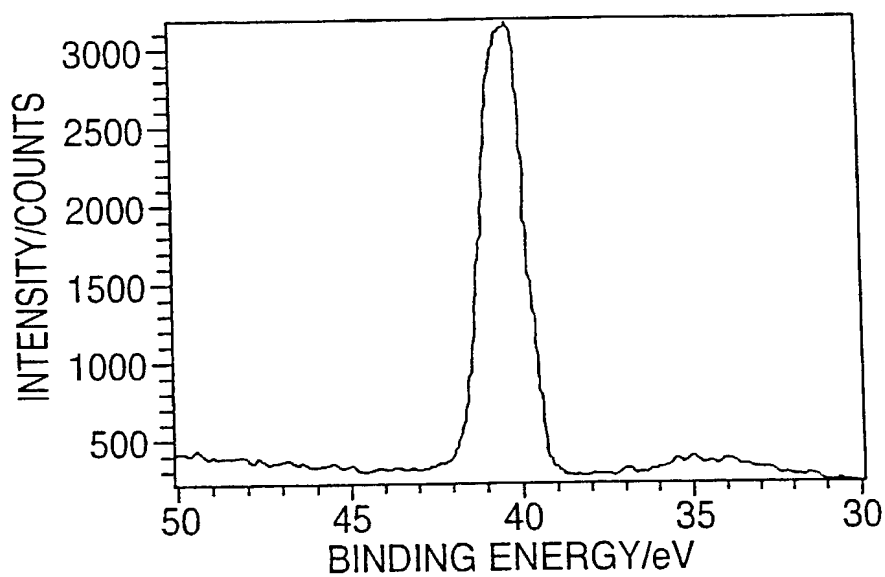
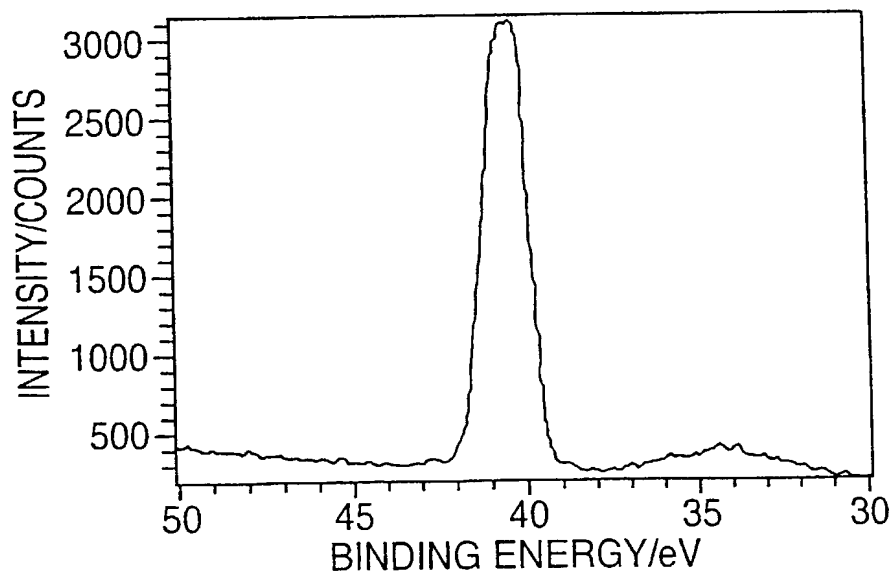


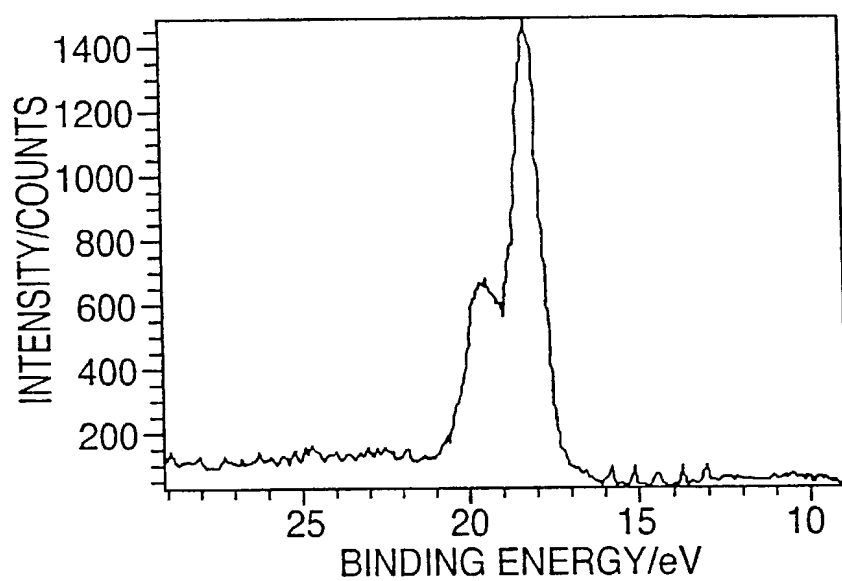
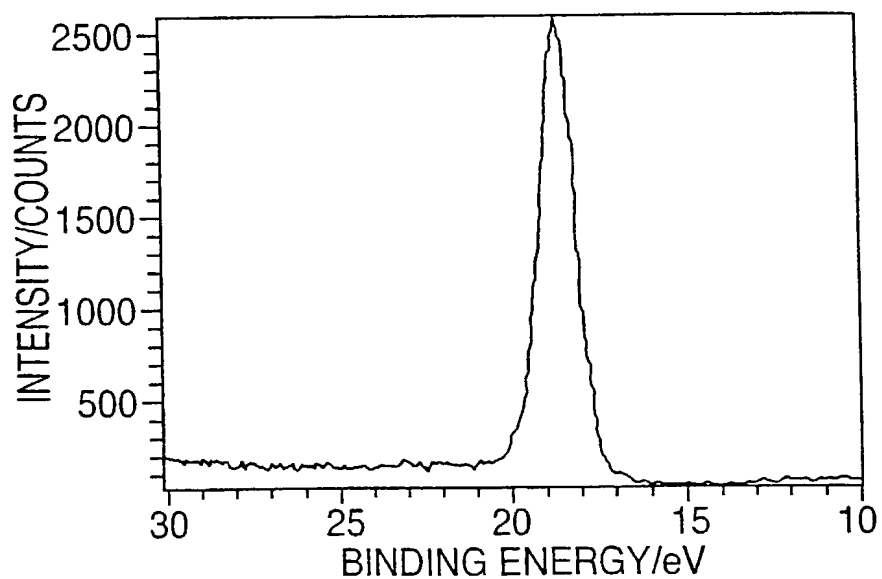
FIG. 6B



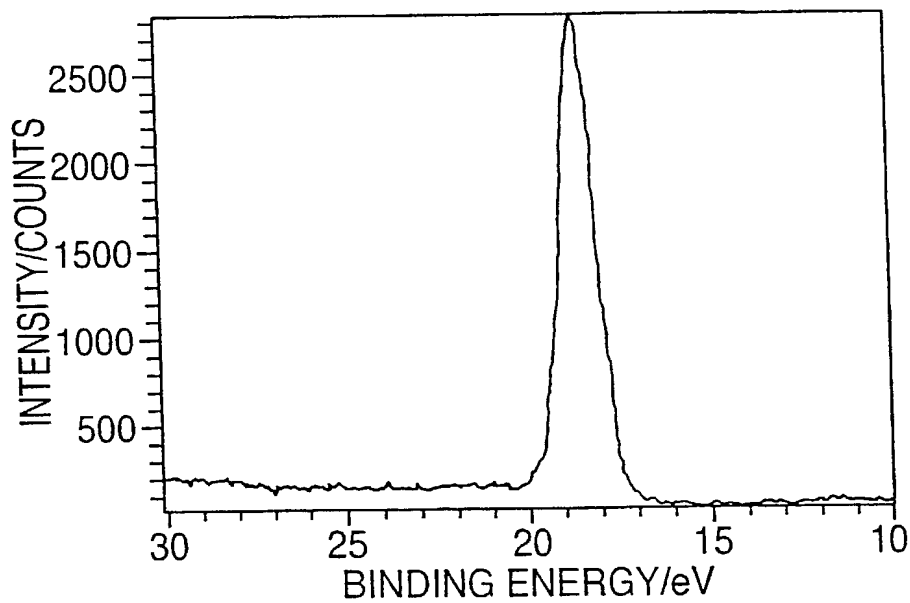
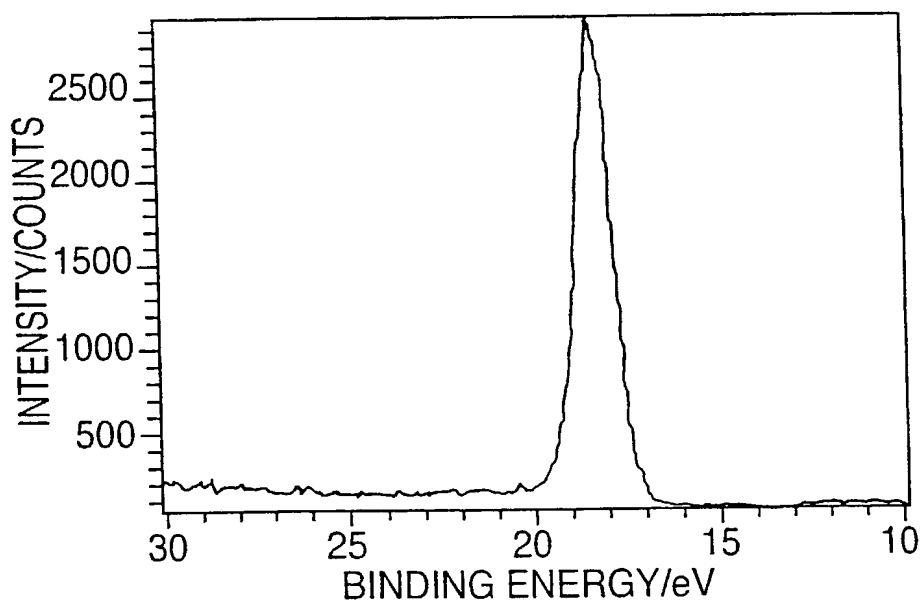
6/11

FIG. 6C**FIG. 6D**

7/11

FIG. 7A**FIG. 7B**

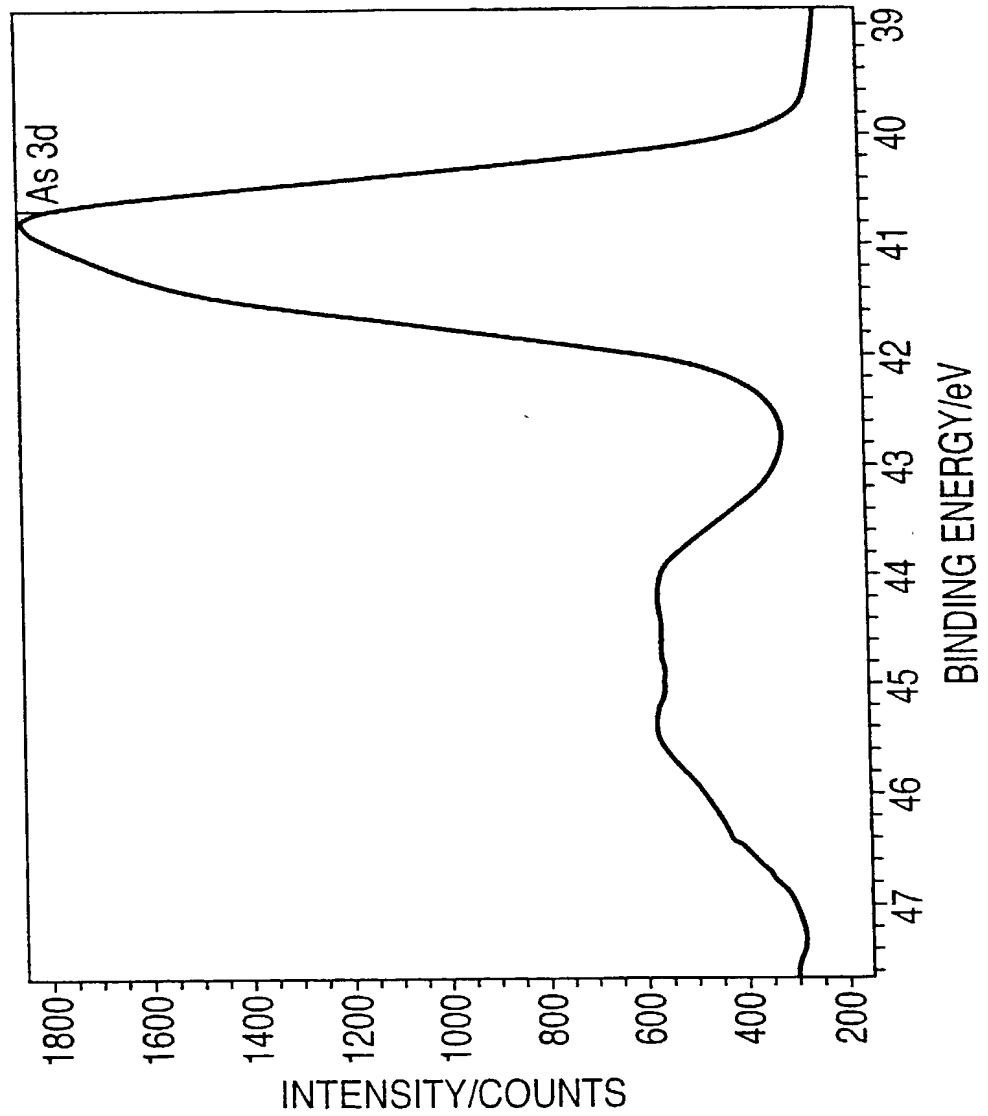
8/11

FIG. 7C**FIG. 7D**

SUBSTITUTE SHEET (RULE 26)

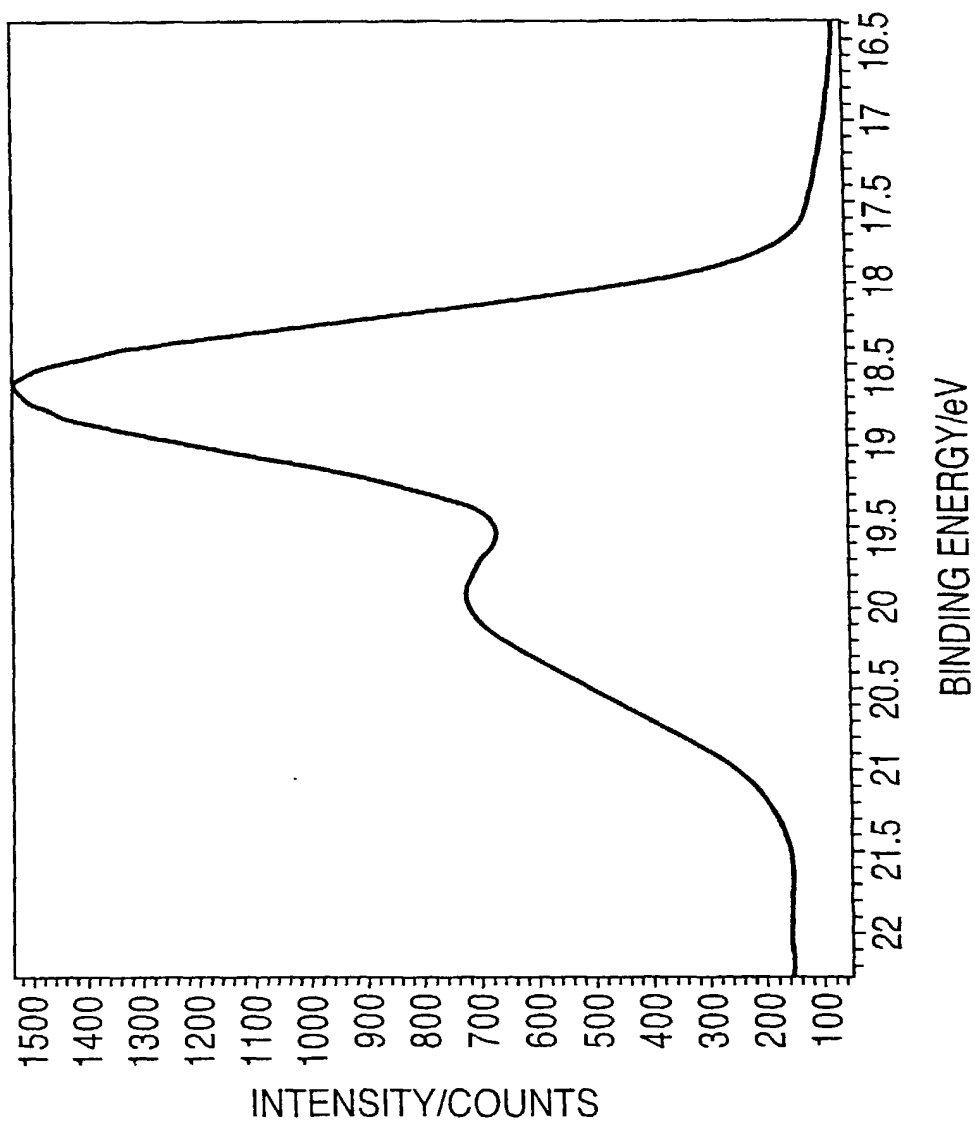
9/11

FIG. 8



10/11

FIG. 9



II/II

FIG. 10

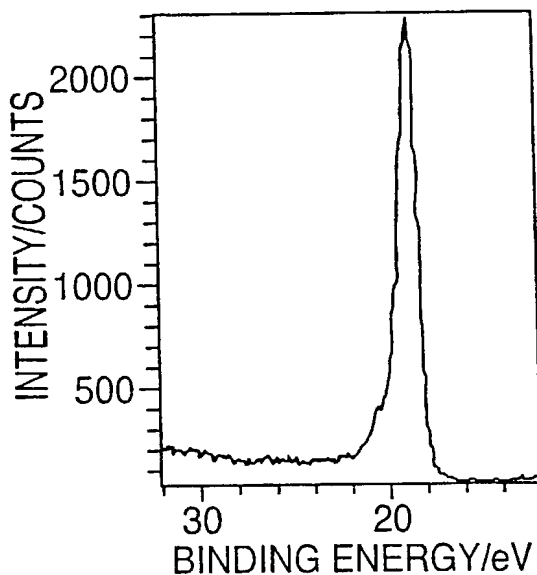
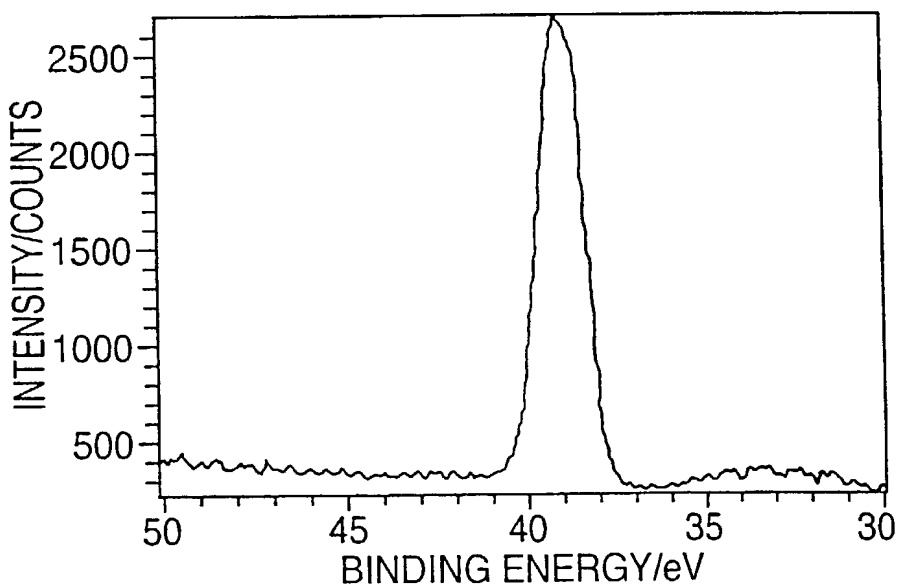


FIG. 11



DECLARATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY

As a below-named inventor, I hereby declare that:

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name.

I believe that I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled PASSIVATION OF MATERIALS USING ULTRA-FAST PULSED LASER

the specification of which

☐

is attached hereto.

☒

was filed on September 11, 2000, as United States Application No. _____ or PCT International Application No. PCT/US00/24837, and was amended on _____.

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above-identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above. I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to patentability as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, § 1.56.

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35, United States Code, § 119 (a)-(d) or (f), or 365(b) of any foreign application(s) for patent, inventor's or plant breeder's rights certificate(s), or 365(a) of any PCT international application which designated at least one country other than the United States of America, listed below and have also identified below any foreign application for patent, inventor's or plant breeder's rights certificate(s), or any PCT international application having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed:

| Application No. | Country | Filing Date | Priority Claimed | |
|-----------------|---------|-------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| | | | Yes | No |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, § 119(e) of any United States provisional application(s) listed below:

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|------------------------|---------------------------|
| <u>Application No.</u> | <u>Filing Date</u> |
| <u>60/153,069</u> | <u>September 10, 1999</u> |

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, § 120 of any United States application(s) listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of Title 35, United States Code, § 112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to patentability as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, § 1.56 which became available between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT international filing date of this application:

| | |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| <u>Application No.</u> | <u>Filing Date</u> |
| | |
| | |

(2) I hereby appoint Nelson H. Shapiro, Reg. No. 17,095, Mitchell W. Shapiro, Reg. No. 31,568, and the other practitioners associated with the Customer Number provided below to prosecute this application and to transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith, and direct that all correspondence be addressed to that Customer Number:

Customer Number 000181.

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under § 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

- (1) Full name of sole or first inventor: Tarak A. RAILKAR
 Date: June 04, 2002 Signature: Tarak
 Citizenship: India Residence: Irvine, California CA.
 Post Office Address: c/o University of Arkansas, Office of the Director, 120 Ozark Hall, Fayetteville, Arkansas 72701
- (2) Full name of second joint inventor, if any: Ajay P. MALSHE
 Date: _____ Signature: _____
 Citizenship: India Residence: Fayetteville, Arkansas
 Post Office Address: c/o University of Arkansas Research and Sponsored Programs, Office of the Director, 120 Ozark Hall, Fayetteville, Arkansas 72701

- (3) Full name of third joint inventor, if any: William D. BROWN
 Date: _____ Signature: _____
 Citizenship: United States Residence: Fayetteville, Arkansas
 Post Office Address: c/o University of Arkansas
Research and Sponsored Programs, Office of the Director, 120 Ozark Hall,
Fayetteville, Arkansas 72701
- (4) Full name of fourth joint inventor, if any: _____
 Date: _____ Signature: _____
 Citizenship: _____ Residence: _____
 Post Office Address: _____
- (5) Full name of fifth joint inventor, if any: _____
 Date: _____ Signature: _____
 Citizenship: _____ Residence: _____
 Post Office Address: _____
- (6) Full name of sixth joint inventor, if any: _____
 Date: _____ Signature: _____
 Citizenship: _____ Residence: _____
 Post Office Address: _____
- (7) Full name of seventh joint inventor, if any: _____
 Date: _____ Signature: _____
 Citizenship: _____ Residence: _____
 Post Office Address: _____
- (8) Full name of eighth joint inventor, if any: _____
 Date: _____ Signature: _____
 Citizenship: _____ Residence: _____
 Post Office Address: _____
- (9) Full name of ninth joint inventor, if any: _____
 Date: _____ Signature: _____
 Citizenship: _____ Residence: _____
 Post Office Address: _____
- (10) Full name of tenth joint inventor, if any: _____
 Date: _____ Signature: _____
 Citizenship: _____ Residence: _____
 Post Office Address: _____
- (11) Full name of eleventh joint inventor, if any: _____
 Date: _____ Signature: _____
 Citizenship: _____ Residence: _____
 Post Office Address: _____
- (12) Full name of twelfth joint inventor, if any: _____
 Date: _____ Signature: _____
 Citizenship: _____ Residence: _____
 Post Office Address: _____
- (13) Full name of thirteenth joint inventor, if any: _____
 Date: _____ Signature: _____
 Citizenship: _____ Residence: _____
 Post Office Address: _____
- (14) Full name of fourteenth joint inventor, if any: _____
 Date: _____ Signature: _____
 Citizenship: _____ Residence: _____
 Post Office Address: _____

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My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name.

I believe that I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled PASSIVATION OF MATERIALS USING ULTRA-FAST PULSED LASER

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is attached hereto.

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| <u>Application No.</u> | <u>Country</u> | <u>Filing Date</u> | <u>Priority Claimed</u> | |
|------------------------|----------------|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
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Signature: _____

Citizenship: India

Residence: Irvine, California

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Date: _____

Signature: _____

Citizenship: India

Residence: Fayetteville, Arkansas

Post Office Address: c/o University of Arkansas Research and Sponsored Programs, Office of the Director, 120 Ozark Hall, Fayetteville, Arkansas 72701

10059762 1370302

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☒ was filed on September 11, 2000, as United States Application No. _____ or PCT International Application No. PCT/US00/24837, and was amended on _____.

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| _____ | _____ | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
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| _____ | _____ |
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I hereby appoint Nelson H. Shapiro, Reg. No. 17,095, Mitchell W. Shapiro, Reg. No. 31,568, and the other practitioners associated with the Customer Number provided below to prosecute this application and to transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith, and direct that all correspondence be addressed to that Customer Number:

Customer Number 000181.

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under § 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

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- (5) Full name of fifth joint inventor, if any: _____
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- (8) Full name of eighth joint inventor, if any: _____
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